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"CALIFORNIA THURSDAYS" COMING TO OAKLAND SCHOOLS

BERKELEY, April 17, 2013 – You've heard of Meatless Mondays. Now Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) will take another innovative step forward with "California Thursdays," showcasing dishes made from fresh, California-grown ingredients.

California Thursdays, a collaborative idea hatched by Oakland Unified and the Center for Ecoliteracy, will be kicked off during the week of Earth Day (April 22) and continue throughout the school year.

While OUSD has made great strides in sourcing more fresh produce locally, nutrition services director Jennifer LeBarre aims to continually narrow the scope of sourcing to California while preparing more food from raw ingredients and diversifying menus. "California Thursdays" is an important next step in achieving these goals.

"California schools serve nearly one billion meals a year," says Zenobia Barlow, cofounder and executive director of the Center for Ecoliteracy, a nonprofit dedicated to education for sustainable living. "When our schools offer California children healthy food grown in California, we help them to learn and grow. At the same time, we help to revitalize our state's economy, reactivate regional food systems, and create living wage jobs while preserving precious resources of land and water."

The Center's work with Oakland Unified is part of its [California Food for California Kids™ initiative](#), which is focused on increasing fresh, seasonal food in school meals; helping preserve the environment; and promoting local and regional economies and agriculture.

To date, California Food for California Kids™ has included the Center's acclaimed cookbook and professional development guide, [Cooking with California Food in K-12 Schools](#); two statewide conferences for nutrition services leaders; work with individual districts; strategic consultations; and many other resources.

On Thursday, April 25, OUSD nutrition services staff will whip up a shepherd's pie made of Foster Farms turkey and potatoes from Kern County. The vegetarian option will be "Beans and Greens," featuring kale grown by local farm nonprofit, ALBA Organics. Subsequent Thursdays will continue to introduce students to the pleasures of fresh, locally grown foods. "California Thursdays" will join "Meatless Mondays" as weekly events in OUSD cafeterias.

The Center for Ecoliteracy is working closely with LeBarre to transform the district's meal program, in support of Superintendent Tony Smith's strategic plan to overcome inequities and raise academic achievement in Oakland schools. Based on the Center's recommendations in its [Rethinking School Lunch Oakland feasibility study](#), OUSD is expected to construct a new central

commissary, an urban farm/garden, and education center linked with school-community kitchens, among other innovations, by 2015.

The Center for Ecoliteracy is a nonprofit dedicated to education for sustainable living and a pioneer in school lunch reform. To learn more, visit www.ecoliteracy.org.

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